

# Fine Feathers

Novelized from Eugene  
Walter's Drama by  
the same name.

By  
**WEBSTER DENISON**

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## CHAPTER XXI.

Brand, the Immutable.

That Brand, despite all appearances, had deliberately sold Reynolds out, was not certain. But in Dick's mind there was no doubt about it. He saw, or imagined an ulterior motive that made it a reasonable conclusion, but he dared not reveal his suspicions to Bob. Dick had never believed the millionaire persisted in his excursions to Staten Island merely for financial benefit to either Bob or himself. He accounted for Brand's first appearance on the grounds of self-interest and the subsequent visits he attributed to interest in Mrs. Reynolds. That he could be so penurious as to actually scheme to get back the stipend he had meted out to Bob did not appeal to Dick, either. For, whatever the amount was, the young writer knew it was but a stipend to Brand. He believed that the capitalist wished to crush Reynolds and raise such an insuperable barrier to his success that he would succumb and become alienated from his wife through hopeless realization of his own unworthiness. But there was Mrs. Brand to consider in this line of deduction and the millionaire had never given sufficient evidence of unloyalty to warrant it. At least, not enough to arouse such thoughts in Bob.

But young Meade, usually so far seeing, had drawn a cursory perspective and perhaps a prejudiced one. For Dick's antipathy to Brand was founded on two things. He despised him as the traducer of Bob and he hated him for his associations with Jane; the more bitterly, too, because Brand had removed her from the sphere of his own intimacy. In short, Dick was jealous of Brand, though he did not analyze his feeling in just that way.

When the cataclysm had come for Bob that afternoon—when the ticker, that instrument of joy, or torture, had told him of his ruin, he had found but one definite conclusion. He would ask Brand to meet the overdraft on his bank and call it quits. He had been prompted to attempt what now stood out clearly as a criminal act, through failure to secure an expected mortgage on his home and through belief that he would win on the stock. The house, fortunately, was still unincumbered, but in the face of failure he shrank from reducing Jane to absolute poverty and had determined to ask this final boon of Brand. He had telegraphed the millionaire asking him to come that evening before the theater party.

Now, Dick's revelation gave an entirely different aspect to the case. Bob had lost and Brand had won and Brand could afford to pay. True, the millionaire had not told him to buy Consolidated Wire that day, but he had not advised him not to, and if Brand knew enough to get in on the right side of the collapse, he must have known the crash was coming many hours before it did. There were rumors in the street that the concern had gone into the hands of a receiver. If this were true the capitalist must surely have been warned of it. He was very close to the officers of the company, Reynolds was positive.

Young Meade passed two more hours with a most unsociable host who insisted that he remain but who sat either in moody silence or paced the floor amid his mental flagellations of Brand, impatient for his arrival. He went up to his room for more cigarettes and while he was gone the millionaire arrived. Dick went to him smiling pleasantly as Frieda admitted him.

"Hello, Mr. Brand," he greeted, with extended hand, "we meet once more, though I've given you quite a rest."

Brand took the hand and dropped it quickly as if the mere act of touching it were ample condescension on his part.

"How do you do, Mr. — I forgot your name," he added lightly. He spoke as if it were of little consequence, anyway.

"Meade. Richard Meade," Dick prompted, unabashed.

"Oh, yes; still on the newspaper?"

"No, I'm nearly respectable now," the reporter answered. "Magazines."

Brand looked relieved. He handed his hat and coat to Frieda and advanced to the fireplace.

"Thought you might be here to see your friend on a story of some kind," he ventured. "I believe you haven't seen much of each other for a year or so. Where is Reynolds now?" he finished, it having just occurred to him that he had not inquired for him.

"Upstairs for a minute," Dick told him. "He's expecting you. He'll be right down. Bob is sort of shot to pieces tonight. I thought he would be and that's what brought me around. Thought I might be of some help to him."

The millionaire raised his head quickly and looked searchingly at Meade.

"Help? Why, does he need help?" he asked with some asperity.

"I think he does—a little. Haven't you heard? Hasn't Henning told you?"

"Henning?" snapped Brand irritably. "What has Henning got to do with it? I don't know as I follow you, young man. If there is anything on your mind, speak it out. That's my method and I have no patience for riddles."

"There is just this on my mind, Mr. Brand," he said. "Reynolds went broke today, flat—you understand, flat. He went broke on Henning's tip, and Henning is your broker. Reynolds lost \$40,000; every cent he had in the world, and you won two hundred thousand. That's what's on my mind, Mr. Brand."

"Well, what about it?" the millionaire asked sharply. He glowered at Dick and thrust out his jaw menacingly.

"I don't know what about it," replied the reporter still quietly, but with his face in just as threatening proximity as Brand's. "I'm here to find out."

Brand side-stepped the issue.

"You told Reynolds that?" he inquired.

"I told him what you won, yes. About his own losses I guess he was pretty well informed."

The millionaire took out his cigar case and tendered it to Dick in a gingerly, matter-of-fact way. The reporter declined, and Brand lighted his cigar with a deliberate movement. He puffed it slowly once or twice with contemplative men, then stepped quickly up to Meade, facing him with a challenging look.

"Young man," he said sharply, "I am here tonight in answer to a message from Reynolds. My business with Reynolds is for him and me; not for you. If you want to play the good Samaritan, I have no objection. It is very laudable of you, but I'll do my own charity work in my own way. If you take my advice, you'll step out of this affair tonight and let Reynolds and I settle it ourselves."

"All right," Meade agreed. "That's what I intend to do. I just want to let you know, however, that I am here to throw out a life line if one is needed. That's my line of business to some extent, and I've got some pretty good life-savers back of me—the magazine I mentioned. I can throw out the line and if the rescue job is too big for me, there will be plenty of help behind. Just remember that," he finished, as Reynolds' step was heard at the top of the stairs.

Meade started for his coat and hat. "Hello, Brand," called Reynolds, as he descended, and as he caught sight of Dick. "You're not going? Why, you can't get a train back at this time of night, Dick. Besides, you must stay and see Jane."

Dick continued his preparations for departure.

"You and Brand have some business to discuss, Bob, and I'll see you in the morning."

"Nonsense, nothing of the kind, you stay right here," his friend insisted. "We'll be through our business soon, won't we, Brand?"

"Why, yes," answered the millionaire amiably enough. "He doesn't have to go on my account."

"I should say not," Bob decided. "You go upstairs, Dick, to my den. It's in the front of the house. Lots to smoke and plenty to read. I'll call you when we're through. Jane'll be home by that time, too."

"Very well," Meade assented. He smiled as he glanced at the millionaire. "I'll close the door, so you don't need to worry, Mr. Brand."

Brand's laugh was void of mirth, but he answered with fine sarcasm and self-assurance.

"Any time you make me worry, young man, I'll retire from business."

"Thank you," said Dick, as he ascended the stairs, "that makes me all the more eager to seek the opportunity."

Reynolds walked to the table and poured out some brandy. "Have some?" he asked curtly, holding a glass towards the millionaire.

"No, thanks; it's a little late for me. You're going pretty strong to that stuff, aren't you, Reynolds?"

"Oh, I don't know," Bob answered tartly, "not so strong but that I can take care of myself, I guess. Where are the ladies?"

"They wanted to get a bite to eat. I slipped away. Mrs. Reynolds will be along soon with Mrs. Brand, in the car. We will have finished our business by that time, I presume."

"Sure; how was the show?"

"Oh, the women liked it all right. I didn't pay much attention."

Brand's attitude changed suddenly from toleration to attack.

"Your telegram—the wire you sent me today. I got it a little late at the office this afternoon; not in time to see you before dinner."

"Yes, I thought we had better be alone for this matter."

"Well, let's get down to business," said Brand. "Your letter asked for some more money. You must think I carry \$10,000 around in my vest pocket. What do you want it for anyway? I thought you had run your bank roll up considerably. You haven't dropped it, have you?"

The question was put with apparent sincerity. It would have been accepted in that light, but for the revelation that Bob had just received from Meade. In the hour that he had pondered over Dick's information, he had determined to carry the fight to Brand on his own ground. The request that he made in the letter was for \$10,000 to discount the overdraft he had drawn on the bank. But he was armed for a bigger battle now and his answer took the millionaire off his feet.

"Ten thousand dollars isn't the figure, Brand," he said truculently. "It was this afternoon, but I have heard something that's boosted the request a little. I want \$60,000. You got two hundred thousand by making me a crook, and you gave me forty thousand of it. Now, partners in any shady job like ours are entitled to an even split, and that's my terms. A hundred thousand dollars minus forty thousand is sixty thousand. How's my arithmetic?"

"Perfect. Almost the work of a sane man," answered Brand. "But the demand isn't."

"Why not?" Reynolds persisted. "I did the work—took half the risk, and I am not sure that you didn't intend that I should take it all. Anyway, I delivered the goods, didn't I?"

"Yes, you did, but I discounted your claim. It was I who took the chance and handed \$40,000 right out to you. I had no real assurance that you would go through with it. I might go a little further and remind you that it was I who gave you the opportunity. I was useful enough then, wasn't I? But now you're broke and you are just finding out that I wasn't on the square."

"Right, exactly right," Reynolds exclaimed vehemently. "Just finding it out. I went broke on Consolidated Wire and you made \$200,000 on it the same day. I bought Consolidated Wire on Henning's advice and you sold it through the same broker. Maybe you believe I'm a baby, but think it over some more."

Reynolds stepped to the table again and reached for the silver cased bottle. Brand leaped to his side and seized his hand.

"Put that down," he cried. "I want to talk to you, and if you have got any brains at all when you're sober, you'll need them now. You're inferring, Reynolds, that I sold you out through Henning. You're a damned liar and a sneak. You're trying to blackmail me and that's the only thing to call it. Why don't you come out and own up to it. You went into this thing in good faith on the agreement that \$40,000 should pay you for the job. You made some more money with my help and then you got the big head, and tried to make some more without it. You ought to be playing penny ante instead of the stock market, and if you think you're going to scare me with any such child's game as you're attempting tonight, you're mighty far away from the truth. Now, you be careful or I'll take you by the nape of the neck and when I get through with you, you'll take a little journey, and at the end of it you'll have a good view of the river. Do you get me?"

Reynolds flushed and his hand shook as he poured out his brandy. He understood quite well that the millionaire meant he would view the Hudson from the gray walls of Sing Sing.

"Just a moment, please, Brand," he said. "I'm going to take this and then I'm going to have something to say to you."

Brand turned away with a shrug and a grunt of disgust.

"No, I think I'll go; it's a waste of time."

Reynolds set his glass down with a bang.

"You'll go when I'm finished, Brand, and not before," he exclaimed. "I know just what I'm talking about, and I know just what I'm going to do, and all the brandy in this bottle, or a whole case of it wouldn't make the facts any different. Your little pleasantries are taken for just what they are worth. I may return a few of them before I'm finished, but in the meantime, just make yourself at home and listen. It doesn't matter what you think I promised to do, or what I ought to do. I have made up my mind that I'm entitled to half the money that you made through my fraudulent report on cement for the Pecos river dam. I was employed by an honest firm and paid an honest man's salary to make a genuine report on the cement that went into that work. I sold myself too cheap. That was to your advantage for the time being. Now, if

you'd have been on the level, regardless of how big \$40,000 looked to me at that time, you would have made an even split with me of your own volition, but you didn't. Forty thousand dollars did look like an awful lot of money to me then, but since I've been mixed up with you and your kind, I can see where you've had a little bit the best of it. I've got a pretty good house, and you've got a better one. I've got a car and you've got two or three and a chauffeur. My wife doesn't like to ride in our car this time of the year. She likes the Brands' limousine better; it is more comfortable these cool nights; and she doesn't care to go to the theater with me any more. The parquet used to be very fine, but the Brands' box is better now. It's Brand this and Brand that, and I'm getting a little tired of it. I've lost a lot of money today, to be sure. Ten thousand dollars more than I've got. But I want a little stake of my own, anyway, and whatever you told Henning, or what you didn't tell him doesn't make any difference to me. If you are so clever that you can win \$200,000 on a stock that I lose forty thousand on in the same day and through the same brokerage house, why you can afford to spare a little of that winning, whether you think I am entitled to it or not."

Reynolds' words came clear cut and decisive. His ultimatum did not partake of braggadocio, but of determination.

"Don't misunderstand me," Reynolds went on. "I mean what I say just to this extent: It's a toss of the coin with me whether I get this \$60,000 or whether I quit it all and go up there for that view of the river that you recommended so highly—anything; anything rather than this. I've lived in this dressed up civilization of yours, this false grab-bag game, this misery, with every natural thing turned upside down, just about as long as I want to. I wouldn't mind a little rest up on the Hudson if I had company, and if I go I'll have it, and I guess you can figure out what company I'll have."

"Yes, I can figure it out all right," Brand answered, "and I'm simply frightened half to death. Can't you see me trembling? This is a nice little stage you set tonight, Reynolds. All you need is the half lights and some low music, and you'd be a regular melodramatic villain. Now, you've made your little speech and I'll make mine. You brought me over here tonight to blackmail me out of \$60,000. You want your answer; here it is. You don't get a damned cent! You've made your bluff, now there's the call. Bring your reporter down now and begin to talk. That's probably what you've—"

Reynolds lunged toward the millionaire, who drew back, fists doubled, ready to meet the attack he fully expected. But Bob stopped, as suddenly as he started. Brand was under his roof. It was no place for violence, however acute the cause.

"You quit that talk, quick!" he cried. "Keep Meade out of this. Don't you drag the only friend I've got down to your level and mine. When I talk it won't be to Meade. It will be right to the man who will put John Brand where he belongs, and put him there quick. Now, you don't think I'm going to, do you? Brand, there are only two things that can relieve me from the hole I'm in. One is money. You can give me that. The other is to make a clean breast of it. I can do that for myself. If you think I'm bluffing, you're crazy. I'm sick of the whole damn business, and so help me God, as I stand on this spot, I'll make you sick of it, too."

"You'll take me along with you?"

"Yes, right up to that place on the river."

Brand's suavity had returned. "All right," he answered, "but let me tell you something. I'll have money and lawyers to protect me and you won't. In the first place that \$10,000 overdraft on your bank will discredit any testimony you give, and if it doesn't, I think you know the law pretty well, and that there is such a thing as an accessory before and after the fact, and if you do succeed in putting us both in jail, remember that there is another person who will go right along with us, and that person is your wife. Now, you just think that over for a while."

As the millionaire boasted of the rich man's means for evasion of the law, Reynolds, who had expected this counter, stood with a look of cynical indifference, but as the full significance of Brand's closing threat struck home, he paled and stepped back with hands pressed hard to his temples as if stunned.

"You wouldn't—you wouldn't do that!" he cried.

"You were the one who was threatening, not me," Brand answered.

Bob rushed again toward his tormentor, but was checked by a sudden opening of the door.

"Good night, Mrs. Brand," they heard Jane say, and Reynolds stopped midway.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

A nagging wife and her husband are soon parted.

# BILIOUS, HEADACHY, SICK "CASCARETS"

Gently cleanse your liver and sluggish bowels while you sleep.

Get a 10-cent box.

Sick headache, biliousness, dizziness, coated tongue, foul taste and foul breath—always trace them to torpid liver; delayed, fermenting food in the bowels or sour, gassy stomach.

Poisonous matter clogged in the intestines, instead of being cast out of the system is re-absorbed into the blood. When this poison reaches the delicate brain tissue it causes congestion and that dull, throbbing, sickening headache.

Cascarets immediately cleanse the stomach, remove the sour, undigested food and foul gases, take the excess bile from the liver and carry out all the constipated waste matter and poisons in the bowels.

A Cascaret to-night will surely straighten you out by morning. They work while you sleep—a 10-cent box from your druggist means your head clear, stomach sweet and your liver and bowels regular for months. Adv.

## Something in This Name.

In New York a teacher found that a little negro girl was named Fertilizer Johnson.

"Are you sure that Fertilizer is your right name?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am," replied the little girl.

"Well, tell your mother to come here," said the teacher.

The mother came the next day.

"Yes; Fertilizer is right," she said.

"You see, I named her after her father and mother both. Her father's name is Ferdinand and my name is Liza, so we called her Fertilizer."

## TAKE SALTS TO FLUSH KIDNEYS IF BACK HURTS

Says Too Much Meat Forms Uric Acid Which Clogs the Kidneys and Irritates the Bladder.

Most folks forget that the kidneys, like the bowels, get sluggish and clogged and need a flushing occasionally, else we have backache and dull misery in the kidney region, severe headaches, rheumatic twinges, torpid liver, acid stomach, sleeplessness and all sorts of bladder disorders.

You simply must keep your kidneys active and clean, and the moment you feel an ache or pain in the kidney region, get about four ounces of Jad Salts from any good drug store here, take a tablespoonful in a glass of water before breakfast for a few days and your kidneys will then act fine. This famous salt is made from the acid of grapes and lemon juice, combined with lithia, and is harmless to flush clogged kidneys and stimulate them to normal activity. It also neutralizes the acids in the urine so it no longer irritates, thus ending bladder disorders.

Jad Salts is harmless; inexpensive; makes a delightful effervescent lithia-water drink which everybody should take now and then to keep their kidneys clean, thus avoiding serious complications.

A well-known local druggist says he sells lots of Jad Salts to folks who believe in overcoming kidney trouble while it is only trouble.—Adv.

## Wonders of Science.

A French scientist says that the billions of cubic feet of heated gas that have been shot into the upper air since the first of August have been displaced by cold air from the north pole, thus causing the early freeze along the battle line. On the same theory it may be that the safe and sane Fourth of July crusade was to blame for our hot summer.

## WANTED

Butternut and Black Walnut Meats. Write, stating price per pound, number of pounds you can furnish. Address P. O. Box 998, Omaha, Neb. Adv.

## She Remembered.

"Mamma," said little Lauretta. "Aunt Mary is getting awfully fat, isn't she?" "It isn't polite to say 'fat,' dear. You should say 'stout,'" rejoined her mother.

At dinner that evening when she was asked what kind of meat she would like, Lauretta replied: "A little of the lean and a little of the stout, please."

Most particular women use Red Cross Ball Blue. American made. Sure to please. At all good grocers. Adv.

## True to Type.

The Customer—These grand opera phonograph records are no good. I can't get anything out of half of them.

The Salesman—They are our finest achievement. You never can tell when these records will sing. They're so temperamental.—London Opinion.